

FIRSTPOST.
eBOOK

Network **18**



Afzal Guru

Justice served or political tool?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AFZAL GURU FOLLOWS KASAB TO THE GALLOWS

The deliberate, political moves that led to Afzal Guru's death	05
The myth-making industry around Afzal Guru's execution	07
What the SC said while sentencing Afzal Guru to death	09
Modi's rise may have speeded hanging: early polls now?	10
Afzal Guru wrote his last letter to his wife on the day of execution	12
Were Afzal Guru's last words, 'I hope you will not cause me pain'?	13
Afzal Guru: Will an execution ever be apolitical?	14

THE SPEED POST IRONY

Two days after Afzal Guru's hanging, family receives speed post	16
Blame Speed Post or govt for lack of information?	17
Don't know why Guru's family didn't get letter in time: Shinde	19
Cruel irony: Afzal Guru's family didn't get letter due to curfew	20
Why Afzal Guru's body should be handed over to his family	22

REACTIONS:

Afzal's rights violated, hanging done for political mileage: Guru's lawyer	25
Celebrations, protests and clashes mark Afzal Gurus hanging	26
We are happy, relieved now: 2001 Parliament attack victim's families	29
Why hang Afzal Guru secretly? Amnesty questions India	30
Pak US ambassador recommits to Kashmir cause	31

THE KASHMIR CLAMPDOWN

Afzal Guru's execution: Death toll in Kashmir rises to 3, curfew remains	34
Newspapers back in the Valley after four days	36
JKLF reserve Srinagar grave for 'martyr' Afzal Guru	37
Does censoring J&K media really help?	38
Lift restrictions on newspapers in J&K: media body	40

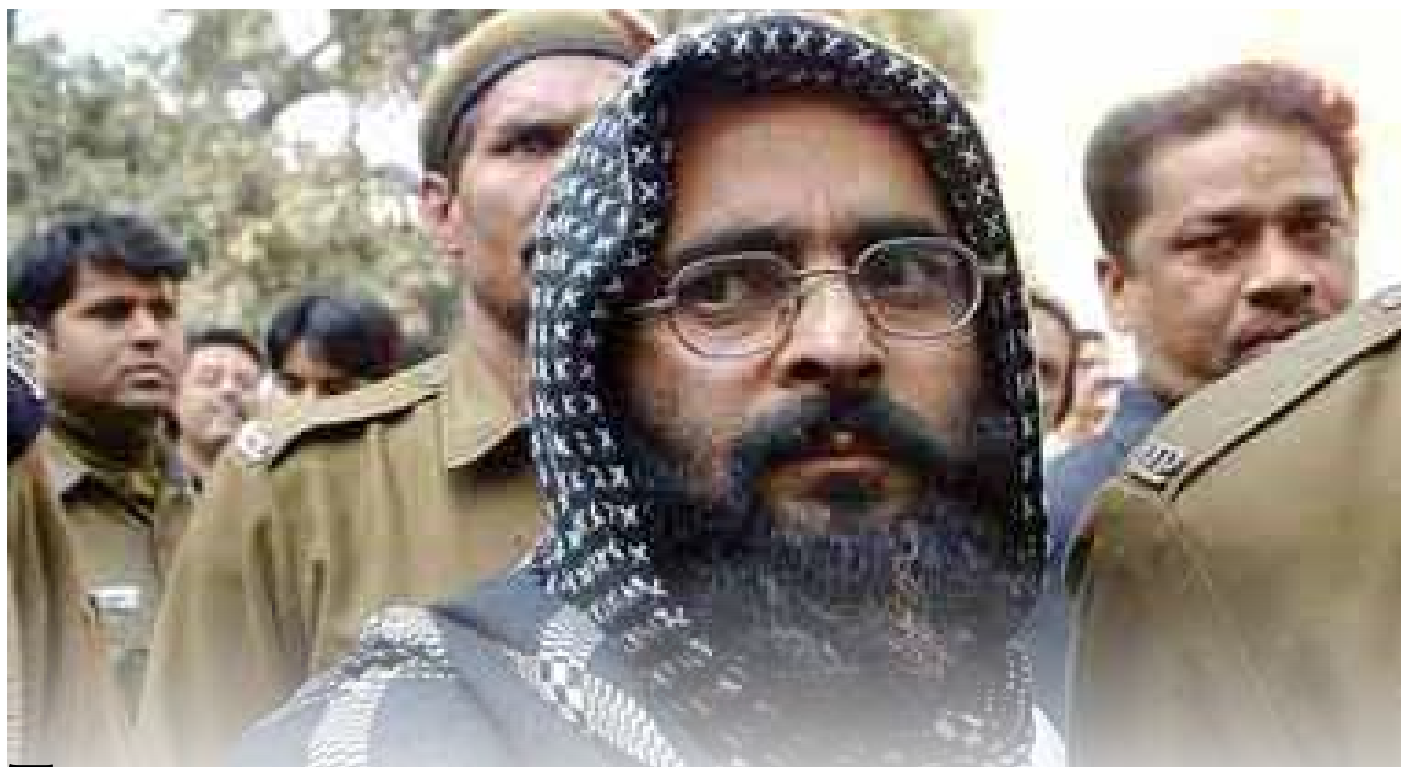
THE OMAR ABDULLAH CONTROVERSY

Now, Omar Abdullah questions secret hanging of Afzal Guru	42
Omar wasn't challenging Afzal Guru hanging: Digvijay Singh	44
Why this sympathy for Afzal Guru? BJP asks Omar	46
Afzal Guru death: Other CMs must learn from Omar Abdullah	48

OMINOUS SIGNS: YASIN MALIK AND HAFIZ SAEED

Yasin Malik meeting Hafiz Saeed: 'Soft' India must blame itself	51
Unamused Centre may revoke Yasin Malik's passport	53
Not afraid of being thrown in to jail, says defiant Yasin Malik	54
MHA to decide on action against Yasin Malik: Khurshid	55

AFZAL GURU FOLLOWS KASAB TO THE GALLOWS



THE DELIBERATE, POLITICAL MOVES THAT LED TO AFZAL GURU'S DEATH

In the absence of a principled, consistent stand on the death penalty, double-standards in the way that they are carried out reek of politics and bode ill for the future.

Venky Vembu, Feb 10, 2013

Shortly after Afzal Guru, the convicted mastermind behind the December 2001 attack on Parliament, was hanged on Saturday morning, Union Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde outlined the course of the mercy petition from Guru – and the administrative action that had led up to the execution.

The timeline that Shinde traced is revealing, because it provides a context to his recent comment about “Hindu terror”, at the Congress chintan shivir at Jaipur. That comment was initially dismissed as symptomatic of Shinde’s motormouth indiscretion, which he later toned down somewhat, but there is reason to believe, in the light of subsequent events, that it may have been a carefully orchestrated offensive to provide a political tinge to Guru’s execution.

It is also indicative of the extent of politicking and posturing that underlies the decision

to hang Guru at this point in time, when the government had been dragging its feet on the matter for close to eight years. And, taken together with the politics that revolves around the pending death sentence against several others – including the conspirators in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination (and Sonia Gandhi’s stated views on clemency for the convicts in that case) – it has the potential to jeopardise the hard-won peace in Kashmir.

Shinde disclosed on Saturday that the Union Home Ministry had first recommended rejection of Guru’s mercy petition in 2011 (when P Chidambaram was Home Minister). But the then President, Pratibha Patil, who from all accounts was about as presidential as an ornamental plant in the Mughal Gardens of the Rashtrapati Bhavan, evidently sat on the mercy petition, elevating buck-passing to a high art.

Pranab Mukherjee took over as President in July 2012, the beneficiary of a twist in the political tale in the Delhi durbar although it appeared that Sonia Gandhi was rather more keen to put up Hamid Ansari as the UPA candidate. Barely a month later, in August 2012, Shinde took over as Home Minister – as part of a larger Cabinet reshuffle that saw Chidambaram take over as Finance Minister.

Shinde said on Saturday that soon thereafter, President Mukherjee returned all pending mercy petitions for reconsideration to the Home Ministry. The file on Afzal Guru's mercy petition, in particular, was sent back in November 2012 for the Home Ministry to apply its mind again.

Shinde then added that he “examined the file carefully and recommended to the President on January 21 for rejection of Afzal Guru's petition.”

The President acted on that recommendation – and rejected Guru's mercy petition on February 3, and Shinde then formally gave approval for Guru's execution – and set February 9 as the date for it to be carried out.

Read this chronology with Shinde's comment at the Congress chintan shivir – that the RSS and the BJP were organising terror camps to spawn “Hindu terror” – and one thing stands out. Shinde made that speech on January 20, just the day before he recommended to the President that Guru's mercy petition be dismissed. Assuming that due application of mind would have preceded the formal recommendation to the President for rejection of the mercy petition, this suggests that Shinde knew at the time that he made his controversial speech that he would be writing to the President and, in a sense, setting a date for Guru's death.

Shinde's comments must therefore be seen not as a slip of the tongue but as a deliberate ploy intended to act as a political countervailing force to balance the action that he knew was imminent – the execution of Guru – and the perception among the UPA that it would inflame Muslim passions, particularly in Kashmir. It is indicative of the cynical lengths to which this government will go in order to put a ‘secu-

lar' spin on what ought to have been a clinical assessment of the merits (or lack thereof) of a mercy petition on behalf of the convicted mastermind of one of India's most outrageous terrorist plots – an attack on Parliament.

The plot gets complicated even further by the fact that Guru's execution was effected by jumping the queue in respect of other prisoners on death row. Arguably the most sensational of the cases is the one relating to Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, for which three convicts are awaiting the death sentence. But in that case, Sonia Gandhi had written to the then President KR Narayanan arguing in favour of clemency for those convicted. Although that argument may have been made in her personal capacity – as the widow of the slain former Prime Minister – it acquires immeasurable weight given her status as the power behind the UPA throne.

It is hard to visualise a scenario under which Shinde, who has claimed in the past that he is “Sonia Gandhi's soldier”, will advance the case for the execution of the convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination plot – overruling, in one sense, Sonia Gandhi's own personal sentiments in the matter.

In other words, decisions on executing convicts in two cases – both of which virtually amounted to a war on the state (one involving the assassination of a former Prime Minister and the other relating to an attack on Parliament) – will have been taken not on the basis of a principled stand on the merits or demerits of the death penalty but on personal and political considerations.

Elected Assembly members in Kashmir – from both the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party (to say nothing of separatists like Geelani) – have pointed to this asymmetry in the way death sentences are being carried out, and flagged Kashmiri resentment over it. Perceptions such as those will only render the situation in Kashmir rather more combustible, squandering the hard-won peace of the past few years.

In the absence of a principled, consistent stand on the death penalty, such double-standards reek of politics, which bodes ill for the future – and not just for Kashmir either.

THE MYTH-MAKING INDUSTRY AROUND AFZAL GURU'S EXECUTION

When you're in the business of myth-making, as Arundhati Roy is in the Afzal Guru case, you don't have to constrain yourself with mundane facts.

Venky Vembu, Feb 11, 2013

Unlike political commentators and analysts, who hyperventilate on pressing issues of the day without having to take an iota of responsibility for their over-the-top commentaries, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah puts himself – and his job – on the line every single day. Even though chief ministership of the troubled border State is decidedly a crown of thorns, Omar has managed in recent years to turn things around on the ground with political sagacity, which fuses empathy for the plight of ordinary Kashmiris with the onerous responsibilities that are placed on his office to maintain law and order – and retain J&K on the ‘mind-map’ of India, so to speak. That’s no easy task in a State where the Pakistani-sponsored terrorist campaign of the past two decades and more and the ineffectual response of the Indian state to the jihadi challenge has vastly abridged the space for reasoned debate.



So, when Omar speaks with candour on the execution of Afzal Guru, and channels the perception that it represents a resort to “selective adoption” of the death penalty in India – insofar as the assassins of former Prime Minister Rajiv

Gandhi and former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh have been on death row for longer, and have the active backing of mainstream political parties clamouring for their clemency – it is difficult to dismiss him lightly.

The right to appeal for clemency is, of course, embedded in the due process of law and administrative redress. Yet, if mainstream parties really adopted a zero-tolerance approach to terrorism, they ought not to – as they have – make political capital out of demands for the hanging of one convicted terrorist or conspirator, while simultaneously pleading for clemency for another.

A principled opposition to the death penalty in its entirety is another matter; but it is not that sentiment that underlies the political posturing across the spectrum in the context of the execution in November of Ajmal Kasab, the lone surviving terrorist from the 26/11 attack on Mumbai, the hanging of Afzal Guru on Saturday – and the polemics over other death row inmates.

So long as the Supreme Court has, after due application of mind (and applying the filter of the ‘rarest of rare cases’) convicted terrorists and conspirators to death, selective exercise of the state’s right to execute in such rare instances validates perceptions of the sort that Omar articulates: that the state (and political parties) are playing politics with human lives – which is perverse even if those ‘humans’ have perpetrated inhuman deeds.

Yet, when Omar goes on to say that Afzal Guru will likely influence and inspire a generation of young Kashmiris, he perhaps overstates the case and unwittingly feeds the “myth-making indus-

try” that has come up around Afzal Guru.

Afzal Guru’s cut-short life is testimony to the utter and colossal waste of being brainwashed by mindless Pakistani-sponsored jihadism in the guise of advancing Kashmiri “azaadi” dreams. Like many others indoctrinated on false ideologies, who crossed the border into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the belief that they were revolutionaries in the “azaadi cause”, Afzal Guru became disenchanted by what he saw. As he himself acknowledged (in this interview), his travel to PoK convinced him that terrorism in Kashmir was nothing but a money-spawning business, motivated not by any higher yearning for “freedom” or any sense of logic.

But unlike many others, Afzal Guru had a second shot at life. After surrendering to the Jammu and Kashmir police, he relocated to Delhi, took up a mainstream career - and could arguably have redeemed himself and made something of his life if he hadn’t slipped back into the orbit of Pakistani-sponsored terrorists and willingly aided them in the attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001.

It is that message that ought to be amplified in Kashmir, including among the young, and Omar Abdullah is best placed to convey it. But when he speaks of Afzal Guru as someone who will likely inspire a generation of young Kashmiris, he yields too easily to the myth-making industry around Afzal Guru that plays around with “truth”.

In a polemical essay in *The Hindu* on Sunday (here), Arundhati Roy, the head priestess of that myth-making industry, peddles mistruths and hand-picks half-truths to portray Afzal Guru as “a victim of torture, blackmail, extortion.” With

characteristic hyperbole, she dismisses the entire body of evidence against Afzal Guru (which the Supreme Court had considered and, after due application of mind, pronounced verdict on) as a “pile up of lies and fabricated evidence.”

It would have been immensely gratifying to rip Arundhati Roy’s argument to shreds, but I’ve been spared that exertion (and denied the pleasure!) because Praveen Swami has, in his response today (here), done a masterly job of it. Roy has, as Swami points out, built her case around “what can, at best, be described as parts of the evidence, cherry-picked for polemical effect.” Additionally, she is guilty of “censoring... facts that sit ill with her account” – that during the trial phase, the judicial system was blind to Afzal Guru’s legal rights.

Arundhati Roy also peddles the myth that the Indian government recalled its Ambassador from Pakistan and mobilised half a million soldiers to the Pakistan border “based only on Afzal’s confession.” In fact, as Swami points out, there is a fairly persuasive body of evidence to establish just who carried out the attack on the Indian parliament – and why. The fact that it was the Jaish-e-Muhammad that, operating under Pakistan’s ISI, that carried out the attack was well-known even then – and validated by the testimony of, among others, a former ISI chief.

Swami concludes that “the ground beneath Ms Roy’s seismic claims... is shaky – to say the least.”

But then, when you’re in the business of myth-making, as Arundhati Roy is in the Afzal Guru case, you don’t have to constrain yourself with mundane facts...

WHAT THE SC SAID WHILE SENTENCING AFZAL GURU TO DEATH

While taking away his right to life, the court had said the manner in which he conspired to wage war against the nation and the support he extended for carrying out the criminal conspiracy made him a “menace to the society”.

PTI, Feb 9, 2013

New Delhi: The Supreme Court had while upholding Afzal Guru's death sentence had termed the attack on Parliament in 2001 as an unparalleled assault on the supreme seat of democracy.

“He is definitely involved in the conspiracy to attack Parliament with the use of explosive substances,” Justice Reddi said observing that the attack had no parallel in the history of Indian democracy.



While justifying the imposition of capital punishment on Guru, Justice Reddi had said the attack on Parliament was “a gravest crime of enormous severity” and was a classic case falling under the “rarest of rare” category.

“The collective conscience of the society will be satisfied only if the death penalty is awarded to Afzal Guru,” the Bench had said.

While taking away his right to life, the court had said the manner in which he conspired to wage war against the nation and the support he extended for carrying out the criminal conspiracy made him a “menace to the society”.

In its 271-page judgement delivered on 4 August, 2005, a division bench of Justice P V Reddi and Justice P P Naolekar had said there was clinching evidence against Guru regarding his nexus with the terrorists who carried out the “terrorist act of most diabolical nature”.

There was not even a shred of doubt about his complicity in hatching of the criminal conspiracy to attack Parliament and evidence showed that he had actively participated in its execution, it said.

“All evidences unerringly point to Afzal Guru, a key conspirator, who played an active role”, the Bench said observing that by no standards his act could be termed innocuous.

The trial Court had awarded death penalty to Shaukat, Guru and Geelani while sentencing Afsan to five years imprisonment for their role in the 13 December, 2001 terrorist attack on Parliament which had led to mobilisation of troops on the Indo-Pak border and brought the two countries on the brink of war.

The Delhi High Court had upheld the death penalty to Afzal and Shaukat under Sections 302 (murder), 121 (waging war against the nation) and Sections 3(2) and 4 of POTA but had acquitted both Geelani and Afsan.

MODI'S RISE MAY HAVE SPEEDED HANGING: **EARLY POLLS NOW?**

The hanging of Afzal Guru was always on the cards after the Kasab execution. Modi's impending rise had made it inevitable in the Congress' political calculations.

R Jagannathan, Feb 9, 2013

There is now little doubt that the early-morning hanging of Afzal Guru, the Kashmiri who was convicted for the 2001 attack on Parliament, is an intensely political decision. Taken together with the earlier hanging of Ajmal Kasab, the 26/11 terrorist, last November, it shows that the Congress party has decided to shift the terms of the political debate for 2014.



While it is possible to claim that all hangings are political in nature and depend on popular sentiment to some extent, the Kasab and Guru hangings are indicative of a well-thought-out Congress strategy to fight the 2014 elections on an entirely different plank. There is no other reason why the Congress would dawdle over years on the hangings, and then decide on them in just a matter of days.

The common assumption so far has been that the Congress has much to lose in 2014, thanks to its complete mismanagement of the economy under an economist Prime Minister. This is why it is changing the goalposts.

There are several basic reasons for this shift in strategy.

The first is Narendra Modi. Now that it is crystal clear that Modi will be the BJP's prime ministerial candidate, the Congress knows it has a fight on its hands. It has, therefore, attempted to close off all opportunities for a political attack from the Right on the Islamic terror front by hanging both Kasab and Guru.

But unlike Guru and Kasab, where the negative political fallout for the Congress would have been limited, it is unlikely that the Congress will play the same hanging card with Balwant Singh Rajaona and Rajiv's killers, Santhan, Murugan, and Perarivalan. They come from politically more powerful states of Punjab and Tamil Nadu.

The Modi factor behind the hanging was obvious from the timing of Kasab's execution in November – just a month before the Gujarat elections. The Guru hanging comes just before the Karnataka elections, where the Congress hopes to wrest the state away from the BJP. The BJP has now no chance of retaining the state, since even the floating BJP voter will find the Congress's actions acceptable.

In carrying out the Guru hanging, the Congress has clearly written off the next election in Kashmir, but is calculating that losing an ally here or one or two seats in this border state is worth the stemming of losses somewhere else.

But one should see the hangings in the context of the Congress' counter-attack on Saffron terror. This has put the BJP on the defensive on its hardline anti-terror stance. This is Sushil Kumar Shinde's mastermove that seeks to not only change the government's image of being soft on terror, but force the BJP to defend its

own militant Sangh allies. It can also be seen as an attempt to retain the Muslim vote despite the hangings.

One can speculate that but for Modi's candidature, the Congress would have preferred the soft option of wooing the minorities and sticking to its *aam aadmi* stance. But once it became clear that the Gujarat strongman would probably be the face of the anti-Congress opposition in 2014, it had no alternative but to counter Modi's potential appeal to the Hindu urban voter base in some way.

The second reason for Congress move is to shift the focus of politics away from economic failure to emotive issues like terror. Elections are not usually won on just positive agendas, but also in pandering to popular sentiment and fears.

The Congress knows that it has no chance of defending its economic record in UPA-2, not least because Modi is now painting himself as a development messiah and the nation has been willing to buy at least some of the latter's achievements. Not only has growth slowed down, but inflation is making the life of the aam aadmi harder. The *aam aadmi* is angry with the government despite the UPA's huge spending in his name. And the BJP and the regional parties were in a position to harvest some of this anger in 2014.

The hangings will ensure that the next election debate will not focus entirely on the economic performance of the UPA, but on harder political issues.

It is also an indirect acknowledgement that the Congress is not sure of direct cash transfers – “Aapka paisa, aapke haath” – as a vote-winner in 2014.

The third reason for the hanging is Rahul Gandhi. The Congress knows that Rahul is no vote winner. His wimpy leadership has neither enthused the Congress flock nor is it likely to provide any kind of counter to the virile attacks one can expect from Modi on the campaign trail.

The hangings thus provide the Congress a shelter to hide the weaknesses of their prime ministerial candidate.

However, this shift may come with a cost. The effort is to woo the Hindu vote that may be veering towards Modi, but it could also shift some Muslim votes away from Congress, possibly to regional parties. The question is whether the Congress can manage this balancing act cleverly in the run-up to the 2014 elections.

The fourth reason for the hangings has to relate to the widespread realisation that the Congress has completely lost the faith of the urban middle class – thanks to the various corruption scandals uncovered by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the government's handling of the Delhi gangrape fallout.

The hanging appeases the urban middle class, which has been the biggest critic of the government's weakness on terror. Most terrorist acts have happened in urban areas, and the government has had no answer to the challenge. This was one area where Modi's appeal would have been strongest.

To be sure, the Kasab and Guru hangings will be forgotten long before we reach the 2014 elections. This should again raise the possibility that the Congress may want to call the elections earlier – maybe some time in October 2013, once the winds from Karnataka are clear – so that the economy does not come back to the agenda. But one can only speculate on that possibility.

But the hangings are interesting for another reason: till now, we thought the Congress would focus on the *aam aadmi* and wooing the minorities, while the BJP would focus on terror and development.

We now will have a BJP candidate talking about development and not terror, and the Congress talking anti-terror and not development.

2014 promises to be an interesting challenge. Both the BJP and the Congress have shifted to the other's territory.

AFZAL GURU WROTE HIS LAST LETTER TO HIS WIFE ON THE DAY OF EXECUTION

Hours before he was to be executed, Afzal Guru penned his last letter to his wife, Tihar Jail officials said on Monday. The letter, written in Urdu, was posted on Saturday but is yet to reach his wife in Kashmir.

IANs, Feb 11, 2013

New Delhi: Hours before he was to be executed, Afzal Guru penned his last letter to his wife, Tihar Jail officials said on Monday. The letter, written in Urdu, was posted on Saturday but is yet to reach his wife in Kashmir.



Speaking to IANS, officials at Tihar jail said that Afzal Guru, convicted for his role in the 2001 Parliament attack, was told on 8 February evening that he would be hanged the next morning.

“When he was told about his execution, he was cool and calm. He just expressed his wish that

he wants to write a letter to his wife. The jail superintendent gave him a pen and paper,” an official said under condition of anonymity.

“He wrote the letter in Urdu, which was posted to his family in Kashmir on the same day,” the official said. But when IANS contacted the family, who live in Sopore, they said they are yet to receive it.

“We haven’t received this letter. Maybe like the letter that we got today about his hanging, we will get it later,” Yaseen Guru, Afzal’s cousin, told IANS on phone. Afzal Guru was hanged on February 9 at 8 am in the Tihar Jail complex where he had lived in a solitary cell for many years. His family has demanded that they be allowed to conduct his last rites.

“The government will take a decision in this regard,” another official told IANS. Afzal Guru, who used to spend his time in the jail by reading and writing, has left behind many books and hand-written articles.

The family has asked the jail authorities that all his belongings should be returned to them. “The government will have to take a decision on this issue,” the official added.

WERE AFZAL GURU'S LAST WORDS, 'I HOPE YOU WILL NOT CAUSE ME PAIN'?

The 43-year-old resident of Kashmir was reportedly calm and composed during his final march to the gallows.

FP Staff, Feb 11, 2013

Little has been said about the last moments of 2001 Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru before he was hanged in Tihar jail barring that he was “calm and composed” but a detailed report in the Hindu presents a more detailed picture of what the soft-spoken Kashmiri did in his last moments and how the procedure was carried out.



An unnamed prison official who was present at the execution was quoted as saying:

“He was a pious soul and was extremely well behaved. Even as he was being taken to the gallows, he greeted the jail staff he knew by their first names. The only thing he requested before the hanging was that ‘mujhay ummeed

hai aap mujhay dard nahin karaogay’ (I hope you will not cause me pain). And he was assured by the executioner, who himself was overcome with emotion as he kept looking into his eyes as the black cloth was drawn over them, that it would be a smooth journey. And so it was.”

According to the official, the mood in the jail was sombre and despite the impending execution, Guru remained calm and acted like he always had with jail officials.

Officials had earlier said that 43-year-old Guru had been informed about his execution a day earlier and a magistrate, doctor and senior prison officials were present during his execution.

A jail official had said Guru was woken up at around 5 am on the morning on 9 February and was served tea. He offered Namaz immediately after getting up.

“He was taken to the gallows at 7:30am,” the official said.

The resident of Kashmir was executed after the President rejected his mercy plea and the Home Ministry sent the order for his hanging.

[Read the complete Hindu article here](#)

AFZAL GURU:

WILL AN EXECUTION EVER BE APOLITICAL?

Should politics play a role in deciding key judicial decisions like the hanging of Afzal Guru or should political and judicial power be separated always?

FP Staff, Feb 11, 2013

After the hanging of Afzal Guru, who was convicted in the 13/11 Parliament attacks, most of the major political parties have welcomed the decision saying that the law has taken its own course. The chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Omar Abdullah, has however been a notable exception, who said that it has affected peace in the valley and questioned the manner in which it was done.



Though most political parties are united over this issue, can it be said that politics should not interfere in cases where there are decisions to be taken like the death penalty?

“There is something called statecraft and that should sometimes take precedence over the judicial decisions,” said Mehboob Beg, J&K National Conference MP. Speaking to Barkha Dutt on a panel discussion We The People aired on NDTV, he echoed the sentiments of Omar Abdullah – that the hard earned peace in the valley might be disturbed in this way.

“Do they want only two fellows to be hanged. I

haven’t heard a word about them – how about others?,” he said, referring to several other criminals and convicts who are in the death row. According to him, the implications of the death sentence might not be very good for the valley given the frictions and fissures that already exist in the polity.

“Do you want a peaceful Kashmir or do you want a burning Kashmir?,” Beg questioned.

However, Dushyant Dave, senior lawyer of the Supreme Court said that this kind of soft pedaling should never be encouraged and there should be no political interference on the decisions of the Supreme Court.

“There are several cases where the courts can issue suo moto notice to the government for not carrying out the court’s orders,” he said, also referring to the delay in case of the hanging of Afzal Guru. Sonia Gandhi should have never been allowed to grant mercy to the three assassins of Rajiv Gandhi, who are also on death row.

“The real crime is against society and not an individual.” Accordingly, he said that the courts should come up with a time frame to implement judicial orders and keep politics out of it.

But that might be difficult given the fact that several mercy petitions go to the President for clemency, and the President though institutionally free from political interference, is also indirectly chosen by the members of both the state and central legislative assembly.

To watch the entire discussion on NDTV [click here](#).

THE SPEED POST IRONY

TWO DAYS AFTER AFZAL GURU'S HANGING, FAMILY RECEIVES SPEED POST

IANIS, Feb 11, 2013



Srinagar: The speed post sent by Tihar Jail superintendent to Afzal Guru's family in Kashmir Valley's Sopore town was delivered today, two days after he was hanged in the national capital. The letter reached postal authorities here Saturday evening, several hours after he was executed.

"A speed post letter has been delivered to us by postal authorities today. Tihar Jail authorities have sent this speed post to Afzal's family," Afzal Guru's cousin Yaseen told journalists in Daibagh (Jageer) village near Sopore town.

Senior postal officials in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital, said the speed post was received Saturday evening – Afzal Guru was executed at 8 a.m. Saturday – but delivered Monday as Sunday was a public holiday.

"We received the speed post by air Saturday evening. It was addressed to Tabassum Guru (his wife). Sunday being a public holiday, the speed post has been delivered today," John Samuel, chief post master general (Jammu and Kashmir), told journalists.

Afzal Guru, hanged for his role in the 2001 attack on parliament, last met his Tabassum and

son Ghalib in August 2012.

His family has said they heard the news of his execution from a television channel as they had received no communication from jail authorities about the hanging.

Home Secretary RK Singh said Saturday, "The family was informed earlier. I checked from the jail authorities and they informed me that two letters had been sent by speed post. The DGP Kashmir was asked to crosscheck too. It is not correct that the family was not informed."

Jammu and Kashmir Chief minister Omar Abdullah has been highly critical of the Jail authorities for having used speed post for intimating Afzal's family.

"As a human being, I find it very difficult to reconcile myself to the fact that we executed a person who was not given the opportunity to see his family for the last time. If in this day and age, we are relying on speed post to inform a family that their loved one is going to be executed, there is something seriously wrong. I wish we were the ones who were authorised to inform the family," he told a TV channel.



BLAME SPEED POST OR GOVT FOR LACK OF INFORMATION?

Did the government err in its decision to inform Afzal Guru's family over Speed Post about his impending execution.

FP Staff, Feb 11, 2013

Who should be blamed for the fact that the family of 2001 Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru found out through television channels and friends that he had been hanged? In keeping with tradition, the blame has fallen to the messenger, in this case the oft reviled Indian Post, specifically its Speed Post service which was used to send the notification to the family.

When confronted with the fact that the family had not received any intimation before the execution, Home Secretary RK Singh said, "They (Tihar jail authorities) intimated the family

through Speed Post, registered post and the DG (Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police) has been told to check with the family whether they got it or not."

However, a crucial detail that was left out by the Home Secretary and prison authorities was when the letter was sent out.

A user of Speed Post, while attesting to its relatively higher efficiency, also knows that one of the most important factors is when the letter is sent. A letter could take anywhere between 12 hours to 24 hours depending on the intended

destination of the letter.

Even the Chief Minister of the Jammu and Kashmir says he was informed the night before the execution was carried out, in effect giving him and the state administration around 12 hours before the execution to set up law and order machinery to prepare for the ensuing political turmoil. Given this, it is unlikely that the letter was sent with enough time to ensure that Guru's family were in the know about the impending execution in time.

"I wish we were the ones authorised to give the news to the family," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said in an interview yesterday, pointing out that other quicker means of communication might have been used.

He pointed out that he had more intimation when Kasab was hanged.

Even a lawyer who participated in the trial pointed out that Guru's family not being intimated was a violation of his wife's right to know that her plea seeking clemency for him had been rejected.

Unfortunately, they have a point.

Even in the most recent case of the death penalty being carried out, in the case of Pakistani gunman Mohammed Ajmal Kasab, the govern-

ment had sent a letter to the Pakistani High commission and a courier to Kasab's family in Pakistan and had confirmation that it had been received.

The hanging of Guru was no doubt a more contentious issue than that of Kasab and had the potential to have a far-reaching impact on the security in Jammu and Kashmir, but carrying out the execution in complete secrecy has only raised more questions about the political motivations in carrying out the execution.

If indeed the government was following constitutional procedure, it could very well have followed procedure and ensured that Guru's family had some information about the impending execution. The jail manual may specify the use of Speed Post to send such information but to ensure its receipt was the responsibility of the government.

In a democracy, there may be opposing voices to any action. But to ensure they are silenced because it is inconvenient never augurs well for the future.

The government already knew the potential fall out of the execution, the least it could have done was ensured a basic level of transparency. In failing to do so, as Chief Minister Omar Abdullah pointed out, it has needlessly alienated people in Jammu and Kashmir over the issue.

DON'T KNOW WHY GURU'S FAMILY DIDN'T GET LETTER IN TIME: SHINDE

The Home Minister said due process had been followed while attempting to inform 2001 Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru's family about his impending execution.

FP Staff, Feb 11, 2013

Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said that the jail authorities at Tihar Jail had sent a letter through Speed Post to 2001 Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru, but did not know why his family had not received the letter informing them of the hanging until two days after the event.



“His family had been informed. We had told them on 7 February night and the action was taken on 9 February,” Shinde said at a press conference today

“I had enquired because everything the Home Minister cannot do...It was left upto the jail authority,” he said.

When told that the family received the letter only today, he said, “That I don’t know.”

He also defended the governments decision to conduct the entire operation a secret and said that the country “would not function” if security agencies operated transparently.

“Everything you see in the government is about secrecy....Everything about police and jails is in secrecy. If you keep everything about police,

jails and intelligence agencies transparent then the country will not function,” Shinde said.

The Home Minister said the government could consider a plea by Guru’s family to visit his grave in Tihar jail if they filed a petition.

The minister also said that the entire exercise of the execution had been carried out under law and nothing was carried out in an extra-judicial manner.

He also defended the government’s decision to inform the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah just around 12 hours before the execution saying it was a sensitive matter.

“I personally told Omar Abdullah on 8 February night and I told him that we are carrying out the execution tomorrow (9 February). It is a sensitive matter like Ajmal Kasab (the November 2008 attack convict who was also hanged). Government had to be very careful about it,” the minister said.

Shinde added that he had disposed off all seven cases of mercy petitions that had been sent to his office by the president

“The new President has sent seven cases to me....All the cases have been disposed off by me,” he said.

When asked why others on death row had not been executed so far, the minister said that after he sent the order for execution it was upto the state government to carry it out, hinting that both executions carried out over the last year have been carried out by state governments where the Congress was in power.

CRUEL IRONY: AFZAL GURU'S FAMILY DIDN'T GET LETTER DUE TO CURFEW

In a cruel twist of fate the letter couldn't be delivered in time due to curfew imposed in the state due to the hanging of Afzal Guru.

FP Staff, Feb 12, 2013

The Jammu and Kashmir Postmaster has responded to the government's allegation that there was a delay in delivering the letter from Tihar jail to the family of Afzal Guru, saying they received the letter only on 9 February, the day of the execution, and couldn't deliver it because of the curfew imposed.

The curfew, incidentally, was imposed by the state government in all districts of the state fearing protests by people over the execution of the 2001 Parliament attack convict.

"We received the letter on Saturday afternoon. But because it was Saturday, and also there was curfew, we could not deliver it. However, today,

we made it a point to deliver it as soon as possible," postmaster John Samuels told CNN-IBN.

Due to the delay in delivery, Guru's family received the official letter only today at 11:00 am, two whole days after the execution.

Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde has said that the letter was sent on 7 February so that it would reach the family before the hanging, but said he didn't know why it wasn't delivered in time.

Here's what the letter sent by the Tihar Jail authorities to Guru's family looked like:



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT CENTRAL JAIL NO-3, TIHAR NEW DELHI

NO-F3/SCJ3/AS (W)/2013/189

DATED 06/02/2013

MEMO

The mercy petition of convict Sh Mohd.Afjal Guru S/o Habibillah has been rejected by Hon'ble President of India. Hence the execution of Mohd.Afjal Guru S/o Habibillah has been fixed for 09/02/2013 at 8 A.M in Cenral Jail no-3.

This is for your information and for further necessary action



Superintendent
Central Jail No-3 Tihar New Delhi

To
Mrs Tabbusum w/o Sh Mohd.Afjal Guru
Seer –Jagir PS-Sapor Distt- Baramullah. J & K.

WHY AFZAL GURU'S BODY SHOULD BE HANDED OVER TO HIS FAMILY

Despite the hazards, the government should hand over Afzal Guru's body to his family. This is the humane and sensible thing to do.

R Jagannathan, Feb 13, 2013

One of the bad lessons India has learnt from the US is to hide the body of an executed enemy. When US Seals killed Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad inside Pakistan, they took his body and then dumped him in the sea.



In India, we haven't quite done that, but both Ajmal Kasab and Afzal Guru were hanged clandestinely and buried inside jail.

The logic is this: we should not allow jihadi groups or Kashmiris to make any public grave a rallying point for further mobilisation and mischief. This is the same reason why the West does not allow any kind of memorabilia or memorial involving the Nazis to surface.

However, this policy is not only inhuman and undemocratic, but also flawed in its logic.

If a democratic country cannot handle its dissidents and misfits, it has no right to be called one.

It is inhuman for the simple reason that the hanged person's family has the right to claim

the body and give him a decent burial of their choice. It will bring them some form of personal closure even if they don't forgive his executioners.

The home ministry has offered to allow the family to visit Guru's grave inside Tihar, but the family is reported to have declined this offer. His body should be handed over to them, and also that of Maqbool Butt, who was hanged 29 years ago and was also buried in Tihar.

The assumption that any grave will create a memorial and hence create a rallying point for jihadis and trouble-makers is true, but the denial of a proper burial could end up doing the same. In Afzal Guru's case, for example, Guru has been given a burial plot next to Butt's – and this is in itself a rallying point. Every empty grave is an open invitation for more martyrs.

However, it is also fallacious to believe that just because the body is buried somewhere else, no militancy will arise.

To mobilise any group, you only need a memory, a symbol, a statue, or any physical assembly space. Before you know emotional crowds can be gathered in one place. Even though Osama bin Laden has not been given a visible burial space, can it stop militants from carrying his photos and ideas for motivating future suicide-bombers?

You can deny someone a dead body, but you cannot bury an idea out of someone's sight.

The Congress party's political decision to hang Afzal Guru and bury him quietly is essentially a copout: it shows that the government is afraid of the reactions of the Kashmiris.

The truth is, the Kashmir problem cannot be solved by ducking for cover. It has to be tackled head-on, both by having an effective dialogue with the separatists and coupling that with firmness in dealing with any violence. Greater autonomy within the Indian Union is part of the answer, and in this autonomy, there is no reason to leave the other states out. The Indian Union will be greatly strengthened by greater autonomy to all states.

The Kashmir issue is an acid test for Indian

secularism. It cannot be solved by running away from the issue or giving in to separatists running riot.

The government should hand over Afzal Guru's body to his family and grit its teeth to weather any fallout. But in the long run, it will have removed one additional cause of Kashmiri grievance.

When a convict is hanged, all enmity with the people and the state should end.

REACTIONS:

AFZAL'S RIGHTS VIOLATED, HANGING DONE FOR POLITICAL MILEAGE: GURU'S LAWYER

FP Staff, Feb 9, 2013



Supreme Court advocate Kamini Jaiswal has said that the hanging of 2001 Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru was purely fueled by political considerations since there was a petition in the Supreme Court that challenged if death sentence should be given if it is not implemented within a certain time period.

“The question is when there are doubts and when the conviction is purely on circumstantial evidence what is the need for the hurry in carrying out the sentence? Only to get political mileage given elections are round the corner,” Jaiswal told CNN-IBN’s Rajdeep Sardesai in an interview.

According to the Jaiswal, who had represented Guru in the past, currently there is a petition in the Supreme Court which seeks that death penalties delayed beyond a point should be commuted to life sentence.

The Supreme Court is still hearing the matter

and there was no need for the government to jump ahead with this sentence, she said.

“Why did the govt want to over-reach the Supreme Court?” Jaiswal said.

She also questioned the sudden hurry to hang Guru after keeping him in a ‘death cell’ in Tihar jail for years, which she said was worse than any form of punishment.

“If you give a person a death sentence then what is the need to keep him in a death cell for eight years? Have any of them seen what a death cell is like?”

She also said the rights of Guru had been violated in the swift carrying out of the death sentence in this case.

Guru’s wife had not been informed that their representation against the hanging had been rejected despite it being their right, Jaiswal said, adding that Guru’s rights had been ignored.

CELEBRATIONS, PROTESTS AND CLASHES MARK AFZAL GURUS HANGING



Congress Party members celebrate the hanging of Afzal Guru at the party office in Mumbai on Saturday. PTI



Bajrang Dal activists celebrate Afzal Guru's execution at a rally at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. PTI



Police detain a group of students protesting the hanging of Afzal Guru at Jantar Mantar. PTI



Bajrang Dal activists clash with a group of students who were demonstrating over the hanging of Afzal Guru at Jantar Mantar. PTI



Jamat-ud-Dawa supporters chant anti-Indian slogans behind a banner reading as 'salute to Kashmiri hero Afzal Guru Martyr' and 'declare India as terrorist country as it is killers of millions of Kashmiris,' during a demonstration to condemn the hanging Afzal Guru in Islamabad. AP



Rashtrawadi Shiv Sena activists celebrate Afzal Guru's execution in New Delhi. AFP



WE ARE HAPPY, RELIEVED NOW: 2001 PARLIAMENT ATTACK VICTIM'S FAMILIES

Nine people were killed in the 13 December, 2001 attack when five heavily-armed Pakistani terrorists drove into the parliament complex and opened fire.

IANNS, Feb 9, 2013

New Delhi: Afzal Guru's hanging should have come earlier but it was a welcome move, said the families of those who were killed in the 2001 Parliament terror attack.

"We woke up to this news and we are very happy with the decision of the government. Though this should have been done earlier, it is a welcome move. Only the government can tell why there was a delay," said Gautam Negi, the son of Matbar Singh Negi of parliament's watch and ward staff who was killed in the attack.

"We are relieved now," said Avdesh, whose wife Kamlesh Yadav was also killed in the 13 December, 2001 attack on the Indian parliament.

Afzal Guru, who was sent to the gallows for his central role in plotting the attack, was hanged at 8 a.m. Saturday morning.

Nine people were killed in the 13 December, 2001 attack when five heavily-armed Pakistani terrorists drove into the Parliament complex and opened fire.

WHY HANG AFZAL GURU SECRETLY? AMNESTY QUESTIONS INDIA

Guru was sentenced to death in December 2002 after being convicted of conspiracy to attack Parliament of India, waging war against India and murder.

PTI, Feb 10, 2013

London: Global human rights group Amnesty International said the hanging of Mohammad Afzal Guru, convicted of conspiracy to attack Indian Parliament, indicates a “disturbing and regressive trend” towards executions shrouded in secrecy.



“We condemn the execution in the strongest possible terms. This very regrettably puts India in opposition to the global trend towards moving away from death penalty”, said Shashikumar Velath, Programmes Director at Amnesty International India on Saturday.

“Serious questions have been raised about the fairness of Afzal Guru’s trial. He did not receive legal representation of his choice or a lawyer with adequate experience at the trial stage. These concerns were not addressed,” he said.

“Before Ajmal Kasab’s execution in November, Indian authorities used to make information about the rejection of mercy petitions and dates of execution available to the public prior to any executions. The new practice of carrying out executions in secret is highly disturbing,” said Velath.

The human rights body went on to ask if Afzal Guru was given the opportunity to seek a judicial review of the decision to reject his mercy petition.

In a statement that is available on its website, the Amnesty International said neither Guru’s family was informed of his imminent execution nor was his body returned as per international standards.

However, home secretary RK Singh on Saturday, said that Guru’s family was informed about the decision via speed post.

Amnesty International opposes death penalty in all cases without exception.

Guru was sentenced to death in December 2002 after being convicted of conspiracy to attack Parliament of India, waging war against India and murder in December 2001.

PAK US AMBASSADOR RECOMMITTS TO KASHMIR CAUSE

It will take a lot more than words to convince India of Pakistan's change of heart. India has come more than half-way to improve relations and help the civilian government while absorbing gratuitous words from the young Hina Rabbani Khar and Rehman Malik.

Seema Sirohi, Feb 13, 2013

Washington: Narratives in Washington can be changed to suit the objectives. It is a subtle art but you know it's on display when officials start using a different language about a country almost overnight, as it were.



Pakistan's US ambassador Sherry Rehman in this file photo.

For about three months I have been hearing from US and Pakistani diplomats and some thinking people at the think tanks that the Pakistani establishment has turned a new leaf vis-à-vis Afghanistan and India. They sound earnest and believable. Some even imply that India is behind the curve in both understanding and responding.

Evidence of this supposed "glasnost" comes from citations of Pakistan's army chief, Gen Ashfaq Pervez Kayani's speeches about internal threats being bigger than external ones, the in-

tention to grant India the most favoured nation status, the visa agreement and the mitigation of anti-India rhetoric in general by all major political parties.

Pakistan's able US ambassador Sherry Rehman recently told US reporters at a breakfast meeting that her country was doing its own regional "pivot" – to India and Central Asia. "This is the new Pakistan. We are moving beyond all templates of strategic policies in the region. Pakistan has no (strategic) aims in Afghanistan."

Here is some counter evidence: Pakistan's anti-India rhetoric and agenda survives behind the veil of nice talk. The MFN status still hasn't come and Hafiz Saeed roams free, spewing venom. India is asked to ignore Rehman Malik's outrageous remarks in Delhi about Capt Saurabh Kalia's mutilated body as a silly man saying silly things. Pakistani friends insist that Malik should not to be taken seriously because they don't. He survives in the government for reasons other than his political acumen. Ok, done.

Pakistan's US ambassador Sherry Rehman in this file photo. AFP

But what about Ambassador Rehman, a recognised and respected liberal, who marked "Kashmir Day" on 11 February by warning that Kashmir could become a "nuclear flashpoint" – a message that US officials who attended surely noted and conveyed up the food chain. This is just the kind of talk that makes them pay attention. To Pakistan.

Rehman then threw in a few gratuitous references to India's heavy-handed execution of Afzal Guru, a man who confessed his role in the attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 Dec 2001 and whose case went all the way up to the Supreme Court. She sounded like any foreign office type and not a celebrated liberal as she recommitted herself to the "cause" of Kashmir and vowed to raise the issue internationally. She said Kashmir was one of the first words to resonate through UN corridors but the international media had forgotten about it.

I won't be surprised if in time when the new secretary of state, John Kerry, gets into the policy weeds of South Asia, US officials start once again raising the possibility of resolving the Kashmir dispute. There are still those in Washington who argue that India should do "something" about Kashmir to "enable" the Pakistan army to be better.

This is a pie in the sky – and it's not even apple. But Pakistan foreign office will continue to press, use Afzal's hanging as proof of India's iron boot, embellish and selectively choose facts to plug into the narrative that Pakistan has changed and India hasn't.

Was Ambassador Rehman trying to fend off her detractors back in Pakistan, some of whom are still trying to hound her with a blasphemy case? Or is she – like many members of the Pakistani elite – a liberal on social issues but a conservative on military and strategic issues? It is worth recalling that as the head of the Jinnah Institute in 2011, she oversaw the now-infamous report on the "End Game" in Afghanistan, which essentially reproduced the views and desires of the Pakistan army. It was an argument for strategic depth against India in Afghanistan by another name.

Which brings us back to the premise of a change of heart. If there were a confident consensus within Pakistan on course correction, scoring points on Kashmir would not be the default sport of diplomats after a dutiful recitation of the Quran. They would have "moved on" – to recall Pakistan foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khar's pertinent advice to India – to seriously

reconsider agreements almost reached in the past instead of "internationalising" the issue.

Indian diplomats stopped mentioning Pakistan in public speeches years ago. Even during the most difficult period in US-Pakistan relations in 2011, there was no gloating or baiting from the other side of the LoC.

Needless to say, the "change" in Pakistan's outlook must be proved by actions not words. So far language is being used as a vehicle for tactical maneuvers because Pakistan is under pressure from all sides. The drawdown of US troops in 2014 has Pakistan worried just as it has India, Afghanistan and even China and Russia. One might add Iran to the list on a good day. Pakistan wants US aid to continue – sections of the establishment have recognized that complete isolation of the country from the west is a recipe for further disaster. They waited the Americans out efficiently and when Washington was desperate to find an exit route, Pakistan released some Taliban to talk peace. "Americans have watches but we have time" – a quote attributed to a Taliban fighter – never rang more true.

I assume it will take a lot more than words to convince India of Pakistan's change of heart. India has come more than half-way to improve relations and help the civilian government while absorbing gratuitous words from the young Hina Rabbani Khar and Rehman Malik. It will take evidence, not speeches, to believe that Gen Kayani has shed his "India-centric" views.

Of course, Pakistan could always take a few steps. The easiest would be to arrest Dawood Ibrahim, a man accused in the 1993 Mumbai serial bombings and financing of terror groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba. After all, he is a self-confessed, boastful criminal and lives openly in Pakistan. Maulana Masood Azhar, chief of Jaish-e-Mohammad, who can be found in his large home in Bhawalpur can also be picked up if the Pakistan's ISI and army so desire.

As the Americans say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

THE KASHMIR CLAMPDOWN



AFZAL GURU'S EXECUTION: DEATH TOLL IN KASHMIR RISES TO 3, CURFEW REMAINS

Jammu and Kashmir government announced a magisterial inquiry into the incidents leading to the death of the three youths during the protests, as the Valley remained under curfew for the third day today.

PTI, Feb 11, 2013

Srinagar: A youth shot in firing by security forces during protests in the Kashmir Valley against the hanging of Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru died early today taking the death toll to three since clashes broke out last Saturday.

Jammu and Kashmir government announced a magisterial inquiry into the incidents leading to the death of the three youths during the protests, as the Valley remained under curfew for

the third day today.

“Concerned Deputy Commissioners and SSPs (of Ganderbal and Baramulla districts) were directed to lodge FIRs and conduct magisterial enquiry into the death cases immediately,” an official spokesman quoting Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Asgar Samoon said.

The situation today was peaceful so far with no reports of any untoward incident from any-

where in the Valley, official sources said.

Ubaid Mushtaq, who was injured allegedly in firing by security forces at Watergam village in Baramulla district yesterday, succumbed to injuries at 3 AM, Medical Superintendent of SKIMS Hospital Aijaz Mustafa said. Two youths drowned in a river in Ganderbal yesterday when they tried to escape security personnel while being chased during a demonstration by protesters.

The body of one of the youths—Zameer Ahmad Dar— was fished out from Jhelum river in Ganderbal district this morning, official sources said. The other youth who drowned was identified as Tariq Ahmad Bhat.

An irate mob thrashed Executive Magistrate Ganderbal Ghulam Mohammad Khatana and his personal security guard Fayaz Ahmad as body of Dar was being taken to Sub-District Hospital for post-mortem, Official sources said.

The sources said Khatana and his guard had to be rescued by police by firing tear smoke shells at the protesters. Both of them were admitted to a hospital for treatment. The restrictions on the movement of people in the Valley were also further tightened in view of apprehension of widespread protests to commemorate the 29th death anniversary of JKLF founder Mohammad Maqbool Bhat.

Bhat, who was sentenced to death for murder of a police officer, was hanged inside Tihar Jail on this day in 1984. As many as 14 companies of BSF were rushed to Kashmir Valley from Jammu to beef up the security apparatus.

Ten additional companies of Central Reserve Police Force(CRPF) are also due to arrive in Jammu from Delhi and are being rushed to Kashmir Valley. An official spokesman said Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Asgar Samoon visited the injured persons at a hospital here and sanctioned Rs one lakh ex-gratia in favour of the three persons who died during the protests.

“The Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Asgar Samoon announced Rs one lakh in favour of next of kin of two persons of Ganderbal who died due to drowning and the youth who died in Watergam village,” the spokesman said.

Samoon said he has kept three Red Cross ambulances for any emergencies for public, in addition to the ambulances of government departments.

Meanwhile, mobile Internet services remained down for the third day as a precautionary measure. Newspapers also failed to hit stands this morning due to curfew.



NEWSPAPERS BACK IN THE VALLEY AFTER FOUR DAYS

*The newspapers had to suspend their publication
as the authorities did not issue any curfew
passes to the mediapersons.*

PTI, Feb 13, 2013

Srinagar: Newspapers hit the stands today after a gap of four days due to imposition of curfew in the Valley following hanging of Parliament attack convict Mohammad Afzal Guru.

All the major newspapers were available at the stands and delivered to subscribers at their residences this morning after a gap of four days.

The authorities had imposed curfew in the Valley on Saturday morning after Guru was hanged inside the Tihar Jail in Delhi.

The newspapers had to suspend their publication as the authorities did not issue any curfew passes to the mediapersons.

Kashmir Editors' Guild (KEG) has condemned the government stopping publication of newspapers.

Meanwhile, mobile internet services remained suspended and news channels on cable network continued to be off air for the fifth day.

JKLF RESERVE SRINAGAR GRAVE FOR 'MARTYR' AFZAL GURU

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has reserved a grave for Afzal Guru at Eidgah in Srinagar.

FP Staff, Feb 13, 2013

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has reserved a grave for Afzal Guru at Eidgah in Srinagar, right beside that of Mohammad Maqbool Bhat, another separatist leader who was executed and buried in Tihar on 11 February, 1984.

(martyr of the nation) and a grave, with an epitaph, was set aside for him at Mazar-e-Shahuda (martyrs' graveyard).

Afzal Guru was hanged on 9 February and buried inside New Delhi's Tihar jail.



The Government of India said that Guru's family can visit his grave in Tihar. However, his family said they would come to Tihar only if the government agrees to hand over his body to them.

A Zee News report says the black granite epitaph on the reserved grave has Afzal's name on it. Its inscription in archaic Urdu read: "The martyr of the nation, Mohammad Afzal Guru, Date of Martyrdom: 9th February 2013 Saturday, whose mortal remains are lying in the custody of the Government of India. The nation is awaiting its return."

A DNA report says that Afzal Guru was on Tuesday bestowed the title of Shaheed-e-Watan



DOES CENSORING J&K MEDIA REALLY HELP?

Newspaper editors in the Kashmir valley have questioned the merit in banning newspapers and other media in the name of preserving law and order.

Danish Raza, Feb 13, 2013

The clampdown on the media in Kashmir following the execution of 2001 Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru has brought back into focus the issue of press freedom in the valley, with many journalists in Srinagar criticising the media gag saying that though such restrictions are not new in Kashmir, they make a mockery of claims of freedom of expression in the region.

Since the execution of Guru in Delhi's Tihar jail on 9 February, citizens of the valley have no access to news channels and limited access to the internet for three consecutive days.

The government gag order issued by Srinagar district magistrate does not include newspapers, reported Economic Times. But publishers and editors of Kashmir newspapers are worst hit as there has been no printing of newspapers at all under the excuse of curfew being imposed in the state.

"This is a censorship no one wants to own up to," Shujaat Bukhari, editor of Rising Kashmir, one of the leading dailies in Srinagar, told Firstpost.

"On Saturday evening, police parties visited

the offices and printing presses of newspapers including mine. They did not have any official orders. They told us that there was no use publishing the next day's edition as it would not be delivered to people due to curfew," he said.

Srinagar has a robust regional newspaper industry. Around 50 dailies are published here including 20 in Urdu. However, since national dailies usually reach the Valley only by afternoon and only on news stands, local publications provide the masses with their daily dose of news. At present, all major newspapers are available online. But the shutdown of internet services, except broadband services, in Kashmir makes the online editions inaccessible to a large number of people as well.

When asked about the censorship on media in the wake of Guru's hanging, Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah told CNN IBN that "more than the TV channels, it is Internet and the use of social media which ends up with fanning of flames with whole lot of irresponsible reportage and repeating of rumours."

Shamim Meraj, editor and publisher of Kashmir Monitor, said that unlike social media, newspapers could have helped counter rumours in this situation.

"News publications are far more credible and accountable than social media. In no way could newspapers have contributed to a law and order problem in the valley. People are in dire need of genuine information but truth has become a casualty here. This is a desperate measure by a desperate government to save itself from further trouble," Meraj said.

This is not the first media blackout in Kashmir. Such clamp downs have been witnessed almost every time there has been tension in the region. A similar media blackout was seen during the Amarnath land row in 2008. During protests in 2010, many journalists were roughed up and their curfew passes withdrawn.

"It dates back to the time of Sheikh Abdullah, grandfather of current chief minister. There was nothing but radio sets in the name of mass media. The government used to confiscate them in days of tension," said Showkat Motta, editor of Kashmir Reader.

Anuradha Bhasin, editor of Kashmir Times, recalled that when militancy was at its peak in the 1990s newspaper editors faced threat from both sides- militants as well as the security establishment.

"Opinion pieces and editorial vanished from newspapers for almost a year," said Bhasin.

Srinagar-based human rights activist Khurram Parvez underlined the Indian media's coverage of Kashmir issues as one of the reasons for successive media gags in the valley.

"The criminalising silence of Indian media is worrisome," said Parvez.

"When an all girl rock band is banned in the valley, it is seen as an issue of freedom of expression. Why nothing is said in the name of freedom of expression when entire media is silenced here?" he asked.

LIFT RESTRICTIONS ON NEWSPAPERS IN J&K: MEDIA BODY

The South Asia Media Commission on Tuesday strongly urged Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to lift the 'ban' on publication of newspapers in Srinagar.

PTI, Feb 12, 2013

New Delhi: The South Asia Media Commission on Tuesday strongly urged Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to lift the 'ban' on publication of newspapers in Srinagar.



“Through their thoughtless move, the administration have only played in the hands of irresponsible sections. The restrictions, unannounced and unofficial, need to be removed

with immediate effect,” South Asia Media Commission President K K Katyal said.

No newspaper could be published for the last three days in Srinagar due to restrictions imposed following the hanging of Afzal Guru.

“The official order banning cable television and Internet does not cover newspapers but either because of curfew restrictions or the visit of police teams to printing presses, publication was effectively prevented,” Katyal said.

Holding that restrictions on media are counter-productive, he said the approach only helps those interested in spreading rumours.

“As we know from the days of the emergency in 1975-77, restrictions on media are counter-productive. This approach only helps those interested in spreading rumours — and, thus, creating bigger avoidable problems,” Katyal said.

THE OMAR ABDULLAH CONTROVERSY



NOW, OMAR ABDULLAH QUESTIONS SECRET HANGING OF AFZAL GURU

Abdullah, who is at the helm of affairs in the state from January 2009, can hardly afford a sense of alienation in the Valley.

FP Staff, Feb 10, 2013

The secrecy shrouding the hanging of 2001 Parliament attack accused Afzal Guru at Delhi's Tihar jail in the wee hours of Saturday has gradually started haunting the establishment with human rights organisations, activists and now top notch politician like Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah questioning the hush-hush business at the gallows.

Clearly unhappy with the procedure followed before and after the execution, Abdullah while

interacting with CNN-IBN in Srinagar, said, "I wish we were the ones authorised to give the news to the family."

What is disturbing to the Jammu and Kashmir chief minister is that he had prior intimation when the Pakistani national Ajmal Kasab was to be executed but he had little information about Guru's fate.

"We could add on the 12 hours advance flash and say I had a premonition after the Kasab

execution. The home ministry did discuss the matter broadly with me,” Abdullah said.

“I find it very difficult to reconcile the fact that we executed a convict without his family members seeing him one last time. There is something wrong in the system if we are sending information through Speed Post in this era. We could have easily got the family to meet him in Delhi and kept it a secret,” the chief minister said.

Abdullah, however, was not surprised with the execution of Guru.

“I had a premonition that Afzal Guru’s execution would follow Kasab. I had a sense that Afzal Guru would be executed sooner rather than later,” the chief minister said.

Talking about the impact of the execution in the Kashmir Valley, Abdullah said, “Generations of Kashmiris will identify with Afzal Guru. You will have to prove to the world that the death penalty is not used selectively. The onus rests on judiciary and the political leadership to show that this was not a selective execution.”

Nevertheless, Abdullah is worried that a feeling

of alienation might set in among average Kashmiris.

“I will talk to the government about the issue of bringing Afzal’s remains here to the Valley. Afzal Guru’s execution will breed alienation in the Valley,” he said.

Abdullah, who is at the helm of affairs in the state from January 2009, can hardly afford a sense of alienation in the Valley that has already been battered by bullets and bombs.

“A lot of what happens in the Valley simmers under the surface. There are a few things I need to discuss with the Centre over the larger implications. I never underestimate how bad things can go here,” he said. “Our guard will continue to be up.”

The chief minister also gave a sharp reaction to the role played by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

“Why don’t we see the BJP clamouring for execution of Beant Singh’s killers or the Rajiv Gandhi’s killers? If that was to be the last execution on who people who attacked Indian democracy, I would call it a political decision.”



OMAR WASN'T CHALLENGING AFZAL GURU HANGING: DIGVIJAY SINGH

His remarks came a day after Omar said that the execution of Afzal Guru would reinforce a sense of alienation among the youth in the Valley.

PTI, Feb 12, 2013

New Delhi: Congress leader Digvijay Singh today said that Chief Minister Omar Abdullah was “not challenging” the decision to hang Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru and felt that it was “not fair” if the last wish of the convict was not granted.

“For anyone who has to be hanged, there are certain procedures, certain rules under which the person has the last wish and that has to be granted. I am not privy to what has gone

through. The last wish of the accused has to be granted and if this is not being done, it is not fair. What Omar is saying is specifically this. He is not challenging the decision (to hang Afzal Guru),” the Congress general secretary said.

His remarks came a day after Omar said that the execution of Afzal Guru would reinforce a sense of alienation and injustice among generations of youth in the Valley and that it was a “tragedy” that Guru was not allowed to meet his

family before he was hanged and not allowed a “final farewell”.

The 43-year-old Parliament attack convict was hanged and buried in Tihar jail premises in Delhi in a secret operation on Saturday.

At the AICC briefing, party spokesperson Sandip Dikshit also said that “the jail manual should be followed and whatever action has to be taken should be according to it.

“According to the Home Minister’s statement, a letter was sent on 7 February and he said that the family should have known by 8 February. I have only heard this statement of the Home Minister and I am not aware of what really transpired on the ground,” he said in reply to a volley of questions on why family members of the Parliament attack convict were not informed about his hanging in time.

To a question on return of Afzal Guru’s body to his family, he merely said this matter should be left to the government.

Dikshit also said that the trial was fair and three courts have held him guilty and the Supreme Court affirmed his death sentence. “So, I think

we must accept what the Supreme Court has said because it is the best judge of whether somebody is guilty or not”.

Asked about Omar’s remarks that it will have to be proved to Kashmiris and to the world that the execution of Afzal Guru is not a “selective” one, Dikshit said that this procedure has been unfolding for several months and as and when the President rejected Afzal Guru’s mercy petition, the government took action.

“The other cases about which Omar Abdullah has mentioned in his statement, those are also with the President. And the moment it gets cleared from there, I am sure that we will deal with the other cases like we dealt with Guru’s case,” the Congress spokesperson said.

He said that there is a process to everything and that does not mean that a process has to be jumped.

“There is a right of appeal to all people and it is for the president and the government to view whatever fresh evidence may be presented and they will take on view on them. I am sure that the same treatment would be accorded to everyone whose petition is rejected by the President,” Dikshit said.



WHY THIS SYMPATHY FOR AFZAL GURU? BJP ASKS OMAR

The chief minister had said it was a “tragedy” that Guru was not allowed to meet his family before he was hanged and not allowed a “final farewell”.

PTI, Feb 11, 2013

New Delhi: The BJP today charged Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah with “provoking” the situation in Kashmir Valley and condemned his interview for having a “sympathetic chord” for Afzal Guru who was hanged last week for his role in Parliament attack case.

Talking to reporters, BJP spokesperson Prakash Javadekar said the Congress should clear its stand on the interview given by Abdullah as the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister was “part and parcel” of the UPA.

“We deeply condemn his interview because it has a sympathetic chord for the terrorist who attacked Indian Parliament, the idea of India and condemned to death eight years ago.

“So, to raise the issue of discrimination or some other references, actually is nothing but provoking the situation in the Valley. At least the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir should not do this,” he said.

The BJP spokesperson was addressing the media after senior party leaders including L K

Advani, former party president Nitin Gadkari and others paid homage to its former chief Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay on his 45th death anniversary.

Javadekar said such statements from a Chief Minister were “totally unacceptable” when the country was feeling “national sense of relief” after Guru was executed.

“We condemn his statement and we want to ask Congress whether they agree with what Omar Abdullah has said because they are part of parcel of UPA and they are supporting it. So, Congress owes responsibility to respond to what Omar Abdullah is saying,” he said.

On Sunday, Abdullah had slammed the execution of Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru and said it would reinforce a sense of alienation and injustice among generation of youth in the Valley.

The chief minister had said it was a “tragedy” that Guru was not allowed to meet his family before he was hanged and not allowed a “final farewell”.

The 43-year-old Parliament attack convict was hanged and buried in Tihar jail premises in Delhi in a secret operation on Saturday.

Clearly unhappy with the hanging of Guru, the chief minister had said there were many questions that needed to be answered.

On the stampede in Allahabad during the ongoing

Kumbh Mela there, the BJP spokesperson said, “This is a failure of both Central and state government.”

“(Railways Minister) Pawan Kumar Bansal cannot skip his duty only by giving a technical answer that the Foot Over Bridge did not collapse but the stampede happened on the station. There was much chaos and could have been managed in a better way,” he said.

Terming the incident as “unfortunate”, he said the congregation held 12 years ago was better-managed when Rajnath Singh was chief minister of the state.

“Why cannot we as a nation come out strongly with a fool-proof plan so that a big religious congregation will pass smoothly without any accident. We will raise this issue in Parliament also,” Javadekar said.

Asked about Congress’ charge that Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi’s speech at the SRCC college in New Delhi was a “bunch of lies”, Javadekar said the statistics about development of Gujarat and four awards related to e-governance have been given to the state by the UPA government itself.

“Statistics and their analysis is done by the Centre only and then calling it a bunch of lies is nothing but politics. This is wrong and the way craze for Modi is growing across the country, Congress is scared from it,” he said.

AFZAL GURU DEATH: OTHER CMS MUST LEARN FROM OMAR ABDULLAH

Omar Abdullah has a political tightrope to walk after the execution of Afzal Guru. But his interview with CNN-IBN showed that you can do that without sounding completely defensive or aggrieved.

Sandip Roy, Feb 11, 2013

Omar Abdullah is right. When he told CNN-IBN, “If in this day and age we are relying on speed post to inform a family that their loved one is going to be executed then there is something seriously wrong with the way we do things” he put his finger on the issue.



There is more at stake here than just coalition politics or acting tough before elections. There is something fundamentally rotten here that has nothing to do with the actual case against Afzal Guru. Abdullah obviously has quite the political tightrope to walk. He needs to soothe tempers in Kashmir without sounding like he is tone deaf to the anger there. He has to defend a curfew without sounding like Big Brother. And he has to distance himself from the UPA without sounding like he is filing divorce papers.

In those circumstances, a politician could sound shrill and aggrieved (Mamata) or clueless and

defensive (Tarun Gogoi after the Assam riots). Or he could just play the usual blase “everything under control” card that is a political favourite.

Leave his politics aside for the moment. In this interview Abdullah managed a rare political feat. He came across as a real person, not an automaton spouting canned sound bytes.

Here are five things other politicians would do well to learn from the Jammu and Kashmir chief minister.

How to make a point without grandstanding. Abdullah made no bones about the fact that he didn’t like how Afzal Guru’s execution went down. But he did not pander to either side. He did not play the victim card and wriggle out by claiming he was completely in the dark. “Once Ajmal Kasab was executed most of us got the sense it’s a question of when, not if,” he said. Nor did he try to score cheap political points after the fact and say he won’t rest till Guru’s body is brought home to Kashmir. As the interviewer pressed him again and again for his reaction to the news he said simply and firmly “When the phone call came, (my reaction) was nothing. Fine. It’s not like we were being given an option. You are not being asked should we, can we.” In short, he said whether he approved of it or not was moot. His responsibility going forward was as the chief minister of his state. The interview was actually about the issue, not him. Other than one comment about being camped out in Srinagar instead of Jammu he made no attempt to project himself as the hero.

How to talk about the larger issue. At a time when political parties are happy to support and oppose the death penalty selectively, Abdullah said simply, “I am not a great proponent of death penalty. But I am even less of a proponent for a selective adoption of it. If you have it please for god’s sake please don’t use it selectively.” That actually takes some political courage in India these days when capital punishment has been pretty much wrapped in the national flag. It takes even more courage to refuse to be part of the firecrackers-and-mithai splurges when someone is hanged. “I am not going to get into political jingoism. Celebrating a death is hardly a very human thing to do,” said Abdullah.

How to sound like a human being. Politicians increasingly struggle to sound human because they are either busy fanning outrage or doling out sops. But when Abdullah expressed his anguish about the Guru’s family not being informed about his impending execution, he actually sounded like a normal person. “As a human being I find it very difficult to reconcile myself to the fact that we executed a person who wasn’t given the opportunity to see his family for the last time,” he said. The government of India hides behind the Speedpost excuse to pretend it’s done its part. But honestly, this is not about the crimes Guru was convicted of. It’s about common human decency. “Come on, for god’s sake it’s not like this country can’t keep a secret. I am not talking here as CM or politician, purely as a human being this is something that bothers me,” said Abdullah. And it should bother all of us no matter what we feel about Guru.

How to not duck the question. He didn’t deny the media blackout in the state. He didn’t deny there was a crackdown or that protesters had been injured. He had a couple of examples to show that as a chief minister he had to deal with the deadly effects of false rumours spreading like wildfire. For example, a rumour that Guru’s mother had died after getting the news

or that Geelani had been taken into custody and had a heart attack. One can still argue about the need for the news blackout but at least the man called it “unfortunate” and hopefully “short term” and didn’t try and pretend it was not happening. And by the way, he was not shy about smacking Geelani down for his “crocodile tears” now.

How to show the media its place. The interview repeatedly tried to draw Abdullah out and force him to throw down the gauntlet to the UPA. And Abdullah refused again and again to take the bait. What was especially striking was that he quietly and forcefully told the media that as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir he can, and will, talk to Delhi on his own. He does not need a television channel to be his conduit. “I don’t threaten through television channels or newspapers. Whatever discussions I have to have with the UPA or Government of India, I will do that,” he said. And then just to make that point crystal clear he showed that he knows full well that interviews are a double edged sword. Asked if he was now engaged in “wait and watch” vis-à-vis the UPA, he said “The moment you say wait and watch, your ticker is going to say Omar threatens the UPA. That is not what I am doing.”

Omar Abdullah is by no means a miracle worker. His tenure as the chief minister is checkered at best. Even his television interview has come under attack from the opposition in the state which complained rightly that the cable television came back on in the Valley when the interviews aired and then was gone again. “Omar is allowed to speak, nobody else is, that is outrageous to say the least,” Naeem Akhtar, the spokesman of the PDP told the media.

All fair points, but at least in his interview Omar Abdullah came across as something more genuine than the usual calculating political animal. And in these mealy-mouthed times when politicians either don’t talk at all or say too much without saying anything, that is worth noting.

OMINOUS SIGNS: YASIN MALIK AND HAFIZ SAEED



YASIN MALIK MEETING HAFIZ SAEED: 'SOFT' INDIA MUST BLAME ITSELF

There is nothing surprising about Malik's sharing a dais with Hafiz Saeed. If the Indian soft state cannot establish its authority even in the face of brazen challenges to India's territorial integrity in Kashmir, how can it expect others to respect it?

Venky Vembu, Feb 12, 2013

The outrage over JKLF leader Yasin Malik's sharing a dais with Hafiz Saeed, the mastermind of the November 2008 terrorist attacks, at a demonstration in Islamabad to condemn the execution of Afzal Guru is directed at entirely the wrong quarters.

Yasin Malik's views espousing 'mulq-hood' for Kashmir (broadly interpreted as nationhood) and his seeking out Pakistani support for the Kashmir azaadi cause – such as it is – are a matter of public record. He has always been a separatist, and in a long-ago time, he even took up arms in the cause of Kashmiri azaadi. Although he subsequently renounced militancy, he has never given up on his articulation of the

azaadi dream, and has never missed a chance to channel anti-India sentiments on his occasional visits to Pakistan, undertaken on an Indian passport and with the tacit consent of the Indian government.

This time, too, he was ostensibly in Pakistan on a "private visit", when he was persuaded by the turn of events over the past weekend (when Afzal Guru was executed) to go on a hunger strike. It was at that event that Hafiz Saeed, who is drawn like a dung-beetle to any organized attempt to stage anti-India demonstrations, sauntered in and shared the dais.

The 'reformed' Yasin Malik's invocation of

“non-violence” as a weapon of ‘war’ against Indian security forces – and, in a broader sense, for Kashmiri azaadi – and his resort to ‘Gandhian’ modes of protest (by going on fasts) have led the media in India to label him a “moderate” separatist, and occasionally, even a “Gandhian”. In fact, there is nothing ‘moderate’ or ‘Gandhian’ about Malik.

Yasin Malik is, if anything, walking, talking proof of India’s reduction, under the weight of pusillanimous governments, to a soft state that is losing the narrative in Kashmir.

Consider this: if Hafiz Saeed is walking freely in Pakistan, and staging anti-Indian demonstrations, even though there is a US bounty for his arrest, it is because he enjoys the tacit support of the Pakistani government and the security establishment. And yet, despite the Pakistani government’s repeated rejection of India’s case that Saeed is the mastermind of the Mumbai attacks – which action is not exactly calculated to generate goodwill in India – it is the Indian government that has been peddling aman ki asha pabulum and extending the hand of friendship across the border.

The 26/11 attacks on Mumbai were the nearest thing to a proxy war on India. And through word and deed, the Pakistani government has signalled that it is not earnest about bringing the culprits in Pakistan to justice. If, under such circumstances, the Indian soft state won’t stand up to secure retributive justice for the victims of the 26/11 attacks and instead conveys that it is eager to establish sporting and cultural links with Pakistan at the earliest, who will respect its authority – such as it is?

The Indian soft state’s wholesale capitulation also finds echo in the manner in which former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, the architect of the Kargil war who has been exiled from his own country, is embraced by the media and the aman ki asha brigade in India. While on Indian soil, Musharraf has repeatedly abused his hospitality to slander India and to valorise separatists – and finds a ready and uncritical audience.

Likewise, the Indian soft state and its media have perfected self-loathing to a fine art by

inviting trolls like Pakistan Interior Minister Rehman Malik and cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan to come and abuse or vilify India and offer alibis for jihadism.

So, there is nothing surprising about Malik’s sharing a dais with Hafiz Saeed. The man is feted in India even though his views on Kashmiri separatism are well known, he is allowed to travel to Pakistan, whose lust for Kashmir is a historical fact, and he has been known to channel anti-Indian sentiments repeatedly from Pakistan. On that slippery slope of anti-India activism, it is inevitable that you will find yourself alongside Hafiz Saeed at some point.

It’s been known to happen to leaders of the Hurriyat Conference, who too are considered “moderate” in the twisted context of Kashmir. Intelligence reports have it that a Hurriyat delegation led by Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, which travelled to Pakistan in December, also met Hafiz Saeed and Syed Salahuddin, leader of the Hizbul Mujahideen, which has staged terrorist attacks against India.

Contrast this feting of ‘VIP separatists’ with the very real challenges faced by hundreds of ordinary Indians looking to secure visas for their relatives in Pakistan, and the twisted priorities of the Indian government are laid bare.

Even today, what does the Indian soft state plan to do to Malik? For all the paroxysms of despair that it has given voice to, its intended actions are frivolous in the extreme: it plans to impound his passport and detain him – for perhaps the 201st time.

After years of relative outward calm in Kashmir (despite the undercurrent of jihadi-indoctrinated alienation), there was a very real chance to change the narrative in Kashmir, largely because Pakistan’s perfidy in sponsoring jihadi terror (not just against India but around the world) had been exposed before the world.

But through its ineffectual response to the separatist challenge over the years, and by its failure to channel the voice of moderation in Kashmir today (instead of imposing an Internet and news blackout), the Indian soft state has scored a spectacular self-goal.

UNAMUSED CENTRE MAY REVOKE YASIN MALIK'S PASSPORT

PTI, Feb 12, 2013

New Delhi: JKLF chief Yasin Malik's passport is likely to be revoked by the government after he shared the stage with Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed in Pakistan while protesting against Afzal Guru's execution.

Security agencies will interrogate the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front leader, who is on a visit to Pakistan, when he returns to India, top officials said in New Delhi today, making it very clear that Malik's hobnobbing with Saeed and indulging in political activities against India in Pakistan have not gone down well with the government.

Malik will be subjected to detailed questioning about his activities in the neighbouring country including his meeting with Saeed and other leaders who are inimical to India's interests.

"We are conducting a thorough enquiry. When the report will come, we will take appropriate action against him (Malik)," Minister of State for Home RPN Singh told reporters in New Delhi.

The Ministry of External Affairs also said "careful and prompt action" will be taken if the home ministry requests it for revoking or impounding Malik's passport.

"We issue passport on the basis of no objection certificate given by security agencies. Should we get such a request (for revoking or impounding Malik's passport), we will carefully and promptly take action," official spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs said.

The "limited validity" passport was only issued to Malik after receiving a "no objection certificate" from various security agencies, he said.

According to sources, Malik's passport will expire March-end while his month-long Pakistani visa is valid till 26 February.

The sources said a person carrying Indian passport getting involved in political activities and staging protests on foreign soil against a decision of Indian government is a clear case of passport rules violation.

On the basis of the ongoing inquiry, Malik's questioning and inputs received from various agencies, the Home Ministry is likely to recommend to MEA to revoke his passport and may not allow him to visit Pakistan again.

Malik and other Kashmiri separatist leaders are normally given limited validity passport.

A similar action is likely to be taken against moderate Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq if the reports about his meeting with LeT founder and India's most wanted terror mastermind are found to be true.

Security agencies are also verifying reports suggesting that Mirwaiz had met Hafiz Saeed and Hizbul Mujahideen chief Sayeed Salahuddin secretly during his last visit to Pakistan.

Both Malik and Mirwaiz may be barred from visiting Pakistan again in future.

On Monday, responding to a question on Malik sharing the dais with the LeT founder, Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said, "I will look into the case."

Congress spokesman Sandeep Dikshit urged the UPA government to look into the issue which was described as "very unfortunate" by Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Manish Tewari.

The BJP today hit out at the government for allowing Malik to visit Pakistan and demanded confiscation of his passport.

NOT AFRAID OF BEING THROWN IN TO JAIL, SAYS DEFIANT YASIN MALIK

FP Staff, Feb 13, 2013

Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) leader Yasin Malik has said that if the government wanted to revoke his passport and put him in jail, it could go ahead, calling jail his second home.



“If Indian government has decided to revoke my passport, put me in jail then it’s their wish. Jail has been my second home,” Malik said.

Ministry spokesperson Syed Akbaruddin said the passport was given to Malik, chief of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), after getting a “no objection” from other Indian ministries and agencies.

“When violation (of provisions of passport) is indicated... when it is brought to our notice, we

will act,” he said, adding that the government would act with Malik “as fit of a citizen of India”.

Malik was seen seated next to Saeed, chief of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, at a rally against execution of Afzal Guru, a convict in the Indian parliament attack case, in Islamabad in Pakistan Sunday.

Saeed is considered to have planned the November 26, 2008 Mumbai terror attacks in which 166 people were killed.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Rajnath Singh said the government should “seriously” take cognizance of Malik sharing the dais with Saeed.

“The government should seriously take cognizance of this. It’s not a small issue. I expect this much from the government,” Singh told reporters here.

BJP leader M. Venkaiah Naidu also criticised the government, saying Malik’s passport should be revoked immediately.

BJP spokesperson Prakash Javadekar said it was home ministry’s mistake to allow Malik to go to Pakistan and the party would raise the issue on all forums.

MHA TO DECIDE ON ACTION AGAINST YASIN MALIK: KHURSHID

Amid demands that Yasin Malik's passport be revoked for sharing dais with Hafiz Saeed, External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid has said the home ministry will take appropriate steps on the matter.

IANNS, Feb 12, 2013

New Delhi: Amid BJP's demands that Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik's passport be revoked for sharing dais with Hafiz Saeed, considered the 26/11 attack mastermind, External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid has said the home ministry will take appropriate steps on the matter.

the matter looked into.

Malik, a Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) leader, was seen seated next to Saeed, chief of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, at a rally against execution of Afzal Guru, a convict in the Indian parliament attack case, in Islamabad in Pakistan Sunday.

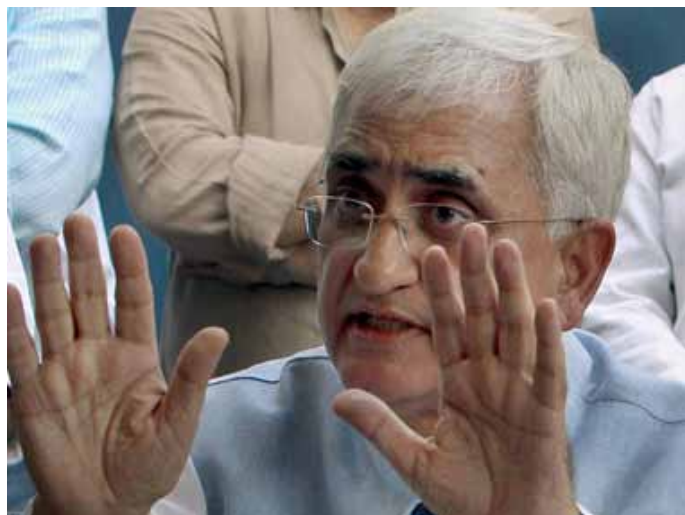
Saeed is considered to have planned the November 26, 2008 Mumbai terror attacks in which 166 people were killed.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Rajnath Singh said the government should "seriously" take cognizance of Malik sharing the dais with Saeed.

"The government should seriously take cognizance of this. It's not a small issue. I expect this much from the government," Singh told reporters here.

BJP leader M. Venkaiah Naidu also criticised the government, saying Malik's passport should be revoked immediately.

BJP spokesperson Prakash Javadekar said it was home ministry's mistake to allow Malik to go to Pakistan and the party would raise the issue on all forums.



"The home minister has already made a statement. The matter pertains to the home ministry. I'm sure they will take appropriate steps. When they do, they will inform us," Khurshid told Times Now news channel.

He said Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde Monday said he would apply his mind and have

FIRSTPOST.

Scan or click to download our Android, iPad/ iPhone apps



iPad



Android



iPhone



Copyright © 2011-12 Firstpost — All rights reserved
Copyright Network18. All rights reserved.